

"Geographically speaking, the Siriono country is situated in the eastern part of the vast plain, partly forested and partly pampa, lying between the Andes on the west and the Mato Grosso Plateau on the east. From south to north, this plain extends from the hill country north of the Gran Chaco to the low unexplored hills of Brazil which lie just north of the Rio Guaporé. Within this area, from the Rio Blanco west to the Rio Mamoré, are located the extensive llanos of Mojos dotted with the island forests once occupied by the Siriono. East of the Rio Blanco, however, between the Rio Guaporé on the north and the Franciscan Missions of Guarayos on the south, is a vast and dense forest plain which runs for hundreds of miles, and within which the few extant Siriono still wander today. This plain contains occasional low ranges of hills, which are part of the same chain that runs into Brazil on the north and into the Chiquitos region of Bolivia on the south.

Except for the above-mentioned hills, the area generally is flat and only about 500 feet above sea level. Both the pampas and the forests are characterized by alturas—high lands that do not flood during the rainy season—and bajuras—low lands that do flood in the rainy season. The alturas are characterized by a resistant capping of partially decomposed lava, containing a top soil of coarse sand with occasional outcroppings of igneous rock. In elevation they lie some 75 feet above the bajuras, which are made up of a heavy clayey top soil and which are flooded during most of the rainy season. The alturas of the forest are considered to be the richest agricultural lands, while the bajuras of the pampa, since water stands in many of them the year around, are suitable

for little more than grazing.

The outstanding watershed features of the region are its numerous lakes and rivers. Of the former there are some 20 large ones in the Siriono country known to me, but which have not been named as yet. Around all of these lakes are extensive flood lands, and stemming from each are brooks or arroyos which drain into other lakes or into the principal rivers of the area, the Rio San Martín, the Rio San Joaquín, the Rio Negro, the Rio Blanco, Rio Itonama (San Miguel or San Pablo), and the Rio Machupo. All of these rivers flow into the Guaporé (Itenez) before it joins the Mamoré (Madeira) in its route to the Amazon. The southwestern part of the area is drained by the Rio Piráy and Rio Grande, which also flow into the Mamoré. Although the rivers are numerous and of good size, the area in general is poorly drained; from the air during the rainy season it has somewhat the appearance of a huge swamp within which there are islands of high [7] ground. All of the rivers follow very capricious courses and are of great age. "

1: Holmberg--43 [6]

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

116, 133, 501

"Although no type of watercraft is manufactured or used, rivers, swamps, and streams offer little hindrance to travel except during the rainy season, when most of the country becomes one continuous body of water. But as already noted, little movement takes place at this time. Even in the dry season, however, there are brooks, streams, and swamps to cross in every day's travel. Since the bodies of waters are low at this season most of them can just be walked through, but if the water is found deeper than the height of one's head other means of crossing must be resorted to."

1: Holmberg--43 [8]

(1941-42) 1950

Siriono

116, 133, 491

"A great many streams become stagnant during the dry season, and are covered with a dense blanket of water grass. These growths are usually so thick that one can walk quickly over their tops without sinking into the water below. But for aid in crossing such streams saplings or bamboos are sometimes laid on top of the grass so as to make a temporary bridge."